



RCD Outlook 2005

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Lower and Upper Clear Creek Watershed Coordinator “Reaching Out”

Watershed Coordinators are instrumental in building partnerships, facilitating cooperation, and ensuring that community concerns are addressed. The position requires perseverance, dedication, flexibility, and the ability to interact with diverse stakeholder groups.



Students participate in the EnviroScape watershed model demonstration at the “Watersheds.”

Over the past year, Leslie Bryan, Watershed Coordinator for the Upper and Lower Clear Creek Watershed, has immersed herself in the community. She has facilitated and coordinated countless meetings, including ones for the French Gulch Upper Clear Creek Resource Management Group and the Lower Clear Creek Technical Advisory Committee. Collaborating with agencies, landowners, and other stakeholders, she has identified potential watershed management and education related projects. She has become active in educating the community about specific issues relating to invasive weeds, fuel management, water conservation, and point/non-point source pollution.

Always looking for opportunities to interact with local residents she has attended many events where she distributed brochures, set up displays, and demonstrated the EnviroScape watershed model.

In August 2004, the French Fire in the Upper Clear Creek Watershed caused extensive damage. The community is still recovering today from the fire’s devastation. To expedite fire rehabilitation efforts, Leslie has worked diligently to facilitate communication between agency and community groups. As part of this effort she obtained authorization from landowners to allow Western Shasta RCD to implement projects on private land. She also worked with the Shasta County Fire Safe Council to develop a fuelbreak maintenance brochure and to distribute educational materials in high-risk areas.

Leslie has been extremely proactive in reaching out to local schools. Recently, she set up activities for students from the Chrysalis Charter School so they could learn about nature and caring for the environment. Students visited a restoration site and learned how to

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Watershed Coordinator (Cont.)



Students investigate micro invertebrates at the "Creek Critters" station during a local creek event.

efficiently and effectively eradicate invasive weeds. They also learned about macro invertebrates and how to write watershed poetry. She worked with students to collect and pot over 500 Valley Oak acorns and 150 other mixed species acorns, which will be used on restoration projects throughout the community. Leslie also coordinated a very successful "Kids in the Creek Day" where three local classes visited Lower Clear Creek to engage in science and service-learning activities. Over 90 4th through 7th grade students and approximately 25 adults attended the educational event. Attendees rotated through a series of five stations: What's A Watershed, Creek Critters (aquatic biology with mentors from Chrysalis Charter School), Native Plant

Restoration, Rocks and Rivers (importance and consideration of rock substrate), and Soil Science (staffed by the Natural Resource Conservation Service).

In an effort to provide resource information to schools and other organizations, Leslie is developing the Watershed Education Lending Library (WELL). This resource consists of a computer database for water education and curriculum. Individuals will be able to sign out materials for no charge and use the data for research, service learning projects, and field trips. It will allow groups to leverage knowledge and enhance community interaction and the exchange of ideas.

Leslie made a presentation to the Shasta County Board of Supervisors describing the importance of watersheds in the county. Following the presentation, the Supervisors formally proclaimed May 2005 as "Watershed Awareness Month". To celebrate and increase public awareness, Leslie coordinated Shasta County's first Watershed Awareness Day event. It was held at the mall with many diverse organizations participating, including seven watershed groups, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California Regional Environmental Education Community, Shasta Conservation Fund, Shasta County Fire Safe Council, Horsetown Clear Creek Preserve, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Invasive Species Program. There were over 11,000 visitors to the mall and a local television station aired two stories regarding the event.

A year has passed and much has been accomplished. Over the next two years, much more will be achieved. Partnerships are growing, stakeholders are more involved, and projects are moving forward. It is evident that Leslie has immersed herself in the community and continues to contribute to the watershed's improvement. Both the Western Shasta RCD and the community have benefited from her hard work, devotion, and tremendous dedication.

Written by Robert Shun, DOC Grant Manager

Filling Vacancies on the RCD Board

Overtime RCDs need to replace directors as they retire, step down, move, or otherwise vacate their position. Occasionally, it may be difficult to locate qualified replacements for vacant positions. Some keys to attracting qualified directors include, increasing the visibility of the RCD in the community, having an active recruitment team, planning ahead for vacancies, and having associate directors as much as possible.

The process for filling vacancies is addressed in section 9316 and 9317 of the CA Public Resources Code. If the retiring director was originally appointed, the replacement will also need to be appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. However, if the exiting director was originally elected, the replacement will also need to go through the election process in the next regularly scheduled election. To qualify as a director, a candidate must be a registered voter in California, reside within the district and either own property in the district or have two or more years experience as an associate director; or, be a designated agent of a resident landowner within the district.

In districts that do not hold elections, the County Board of Supervisors appoints replacements to fill vacancies. The retiring director has the responsibility to notify the county Board of Supervisors that he or she will no longer serve on the board. The supervisors must post a notice of vacancy as specified in Section 54974 of the Government Code.

Specifically, the supervisors must post a notice "not earlier than 20 days before or not later than 20 days after the vacancy occurs." Appointments cannot occur until 10 days after the notice has been posted. It is not uncommon for RCDs to make recommendations on appointments. Sometimes, RCDs will actively recruit directors or associate directors through personal contacts, websites, newsletters, or other means.

It's important to remember that the RCD is going to have a much better chance of recruiting directors if it has visible presence in the community. It's important to advertise RCD success through press releases, newsletters, annual reports, websites, partner agencies, or other outreach efforts. Press coverage can generate interest in an RCD and as a result citizens may want to become associate directors or eventually directors. Furthermore, always make sure to let clients know about all the RCD's activities. Many districts have directors on their board who learned about the RCD because of the services the district provides. At the very least, your clients could provide the district with valuable input or even serve as an associate director until there is a vacancy.

Having associate directors on your board can also be an effective recruitment tool.

Associate directors can provide the district with diversity and valuable insight. Having more

Does Your RCD Have New Directors?

If your district has a new director we would like to send them some material that explains their duties. We'd like to be able to send out the new director material as soon as possible after they start, so we need your help to identify new directors. Send us their contact information and we will send your new directors materials to help them get started in their new positions.

Director Recruitment

individuals involved with the RCD can only help when it comes time to recruit a new director. Even if they do not want to serve as a voting director themselves, they may know someone who would.

In their publication “Proud to Serve: Conservation District Board Members Recruitment Reference Book”, the National Association of Resource Conservation Districts (NACD) suggests developing a recruitment plan. Developing a plan involves first identifying the needs of your district. For example, if your board consists of all retired farmers, board members may decide to recruit a rancher, school teacher, or dairy operator in order to bring different viewpoints to the board. The important thing is to really think about what type of individuals would best represent the diverse interests of the community. NACD suggests analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of your board and then recruiting people who will help make the board stronger.

Once you have decided what type of individuals you would like on the board, it's a good idea to develop a recruitment package for potential directors. This could simply include a brochure or fact sheet about the RCD, and a director or associate director job description. This type of material will let prospective recruits learn about the district and what is expected of district directors. Once it you have all this you are ready to develop and implement a recruitment strategy.

For more information about developing a recruitment plan and implementing a strategy, visit the NACD website at <http://www.nacdnet.org/resources/RGuide/> to view their “Conservation District Board Member Recruitment and Community Outreach Guide”.

Annual Audits

Much angst and confusion can center on the requirement to conduct an annual audit, and for good reason. The number and complexity of laws and industry rules pertaining to audit requirements can be overwhelming, and require an expert to fully understand them. The RCD list-serve has been buzzing lately with audit questions so the following provides some basic information about the state's audit laws.

The first level of audit requirements that districts face can be found under Section 9528 of Division 9 of the Public Resources Code. This section is short and to the point, requiring an annual audit of a district's books, accounts, records, papers, money, and securities be made as required by Section 26909 of the Government Code. The Government Code requires the county auditor perform, or contract with a certified public accountant (CPA) or a public accountant to perform, an annual audit of every special purpose district within the county for which an audit is not otherwise provided. Districts have the choice of using the county or selecting an independent accounting firm to conduct the audit, but in either case, the audits are to meet minimum requirements prescribed by the Office of the State Controller and conform to generally accepted auditing standards. Also, a copy of the completed audit report must be filed with the State Controller's Office and the county auditor (if completed by an independent firm).

The State Controller's Office has codified the minimum requirements, which can be found in the California Code of Regulations under Title 2, Division 2, Chapter 2, and Subchapter 5.

Annual Reports

As we come to the close of yet another fiscal year it is a good time to think about preparing an annual report for the previous year. Annual reports give the RCD a chance to celebrate their achievements over the past year and identify areas for improvement. Such reports can also be useful marketing tools and may even help attract potential funders.

Section 9413(d) of the Public Resources Code encourages districts to prepare annual reports on or before September 1st of each year. The Public Resources Code also states that annual reports should serve the following functions: First it should report on the districts achievements during the reporting period. Annual reports are frequently sent to state agencies, the county board of supervisors, constituents, or any other interested parties. Second, the report should be used to increase public awareness of district activities. Finally, division 9 states that RCDs should use the report to compare district accomplishments during the reporting period with their annual work plan objectives. Although not mentioned in division 9, the annual report can also help districts identify objectives for the upcoming year.

Preparing an annual report is relatively easy. It involves reviewing the RCD's annual plan, evaluating the districts achievements, then putting it on paper. Annual reports should be used to celebrate the success of the district, promote their existing programs, and attract new funders or clients. Annual reports can even be provided to potential directors or associate directors as part of a recruitment package. Your annual report also provides a good place to thank your constituents, customers, and partners.

Some RCDs create extensive reports while others create one page reports that they publish as part of a newsletter. It's up to the RCD to decide which format best meets their needs. However, once your report is created, it's a good idea to distribute it to as many people as possible. If your mailing or printing budget is small, you can always use the Internet or email to get your message out. This can also be an effective way to distribute your annual or long range plans. The important thing to remember is to use your annual reports to celebrate the districts success and get your message out.

Audits Continued

This section of the regulations will refer you to the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants' publication titled Audits of State and Local Governmental Units for suggested auditing standards.

Government Code Section 26909(f) provides a special district the option of conducting a biennial audit covering a two-year period or, if the district's annual budget does not exceed an amount specified by the county's board of supervisors, an audit covering a five-year period. The code defines certain actions that must be taken by the district, as well as by the board of supervisors, in order for the district to take advantage of these options. However, bear in mind that any contractual agreements or federal audit requirements can supercede these options.

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<http://www.fypower.org/index.html>

Save Money, Save Energy, Save Natural
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Flex Your Power at the Pump

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The RCD Outlook newsletter is intended to provide RCDs with helpful tips and updates on RCD work statewide. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have an article to contribute please feel free to call the RCD program staff at 916-324-0774 or send an email to rcd@conservation.ca.gov.